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Blacks Ask What's Coming Down Next?

White County Commissioners Vote To End Minority Affairs

By Jalyne Strong
Post Managing Editor

Following closely behind the Mecklenburg County commissioners' decision to locate the city's Waste Transfer Station in a black neighborhood, was the commissioners' recent 6-1 decision to abolish the Minority Affairs Office and members of the black community feel these actions are sending a message denoting the commissioners' insensitivity to minority citizens.

"They are sending a signal to the entire black community which says, 'You have no voice or representation,'" believes Eugene Marsh.

On Monday, the commissioners reaffirmed their majority vote to eliminate the Minority Affairs Office. The only vote in support of the office was upheld by Commissioner Bob Walton, the only black and only democrat.

Members of Charlotte's black community have expressed that the move to abolish the Minority Affairs Office, supported by the six, white Republican commissioners, is grounded in racism and/or a political move against Bob Walton. Chairman Carla DuPuy and other commissioners

had urged Walton to resign from the County Commission earlier in the year because Walton had been convicted of a misdemeanor. Walton refused.

DuPuy has said that "racism" was not an issue in the decision not to fund \$68,750 to the Minority Affairs office.

However, Marsh, a former vice chairman of the Minority Affairs Board believes otherwise. "It is a move to dilute the black community and separate the people who have the interest of the black community at heart."

The Minority Affairs Office operated essentially as a referral office to aid blacks and other minorities living in Mecklenburg County. "Before the office was set up," explains Marsh, "people did not know where to go to get assistance for a variety of concerns. Through the Minority Affairs office, they were pointed in the right direction, given the avenues they should take."

Kermit Waddell, director of the Minority Affairs Office, was particularly adept at bringing different minority organizations together to combine their efforts to benefit all.

"Now that the office has been

closed," says Marsh, "people have been put at a disadvantage."

The reason the commissioners' gave for doing away with Minority Affairs was that the office was duplicating services of other county supported community services, particularly the Community Relations Committee (CRC), and they also claimed there is a sufficient amount of services in place to aid minorities.

At the meeting of the commissioners last week, when the first decision to cut the Minority Affairs Office was made, DuPuy allowed one white, member of the Board of Minority Affairs, Dick Hauck, to speak on behalf of the office. DuPuy also threatened a black citizen, Cedric Jones, with removal from the meeting because he was speaking out against the cut.

Since the commissioners, excluding Walton, felt the Minority Affairs Office was duplicating CRC services, in connection with abolishing Minority Affairs, the Commissioners decided to give a \$20,000 contingency to CRC for that office's attempt to carry on the work of Minority Affairs.



Bob Walton

Jack Bullard, director of CRC, is white. Kermit Waddell, the director of the defunct Minority Affairs Office, is black.

At a meeting Monday night, following the commissioners' confirming its decision on the Minority Affairs Office, Sarah Stevenson, Coordinator of the Dispute Settlement Program of Community Relations Committee, met with Sherry Suttles, an

Assistant County Manager, Waddell, Sarah Coleman, a board member of the Minority Affairs Office, Cheryl Sutton and Paul Kaplan, members of the Minority Affairs Advisory Committee.

Suttles reported to the meeting what had happened earlier at the commissioners' final meeting on Minority Affairs, reiterating that Rev. Harold Diggs told the commissioners the abolishment of the minority Affairs Office, "would be perceived as a racist move by the black community."

Suttles also reported that Marsh spoke before the commissioners citing the good job Minority Affairs has done in the last two years. But he pointed out, based on the commissioners' decision, "Be sure to hold the Community Relations Committee accountable and makes sure it goes after the money from the state legislators."

Mecklenburg County's black state legislators, Senator Jim Richardson, Rep. Pete Cunningham, and Rep. Howard Barnhill, had been awarding Minority Affairs with monies from a Pork Barrell fund for the last two years. This year, they had slated



Kermit Waddell

\$21,000 to go to the office before the office was abolished.

On Monday, Cunningham and Richardson both urged the commissioners to keep the Minority Affairs Office, claiming the elimination of the office will be "perceived as punishment of Walton."

Then, giving her response to

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Leeper Says "Time Is Right To Run At-Large"



Leeper: "My choices were limited. Either run at large or not run at all." City Councilman Ron Leeper made his official announcement to run at large at a press conference Wednesday. Michael Evans (r) was one of the many supporters from the black community present in a show of support.

By Jalyne Strong
Post Managing Editor

About sixty supporters filled the City Council Chamber to hear Councilman Ron Leeper make the official announcement that he will run at large in this year's local elections.

The announcement was heartily applauded by those present, many of whom were black political, community and business leaders in Charlotte.

Before making the statement, Leeper recounted his experience in political office as the City Council representative of District 3.

"During our term on council we have worked for many issues that we believe have substantially improved the quality of life for all our citizens," he stated.

Earlier Leeper had stated he decided to run at large because the time was right for him. "The choices I had were fairly limited," he claimed. "Either run at large, or not run. Five terms is more than enough time to serve in one office."

"I now believe I have the responsibility to allow others the opportunity that has been afforded me," he offered.

Leeper said the only potential

candidate he knows of now who will run for the District 3 seat is Ella Scarborough. "She has expressed an interest in running for a number of years," he related. However, he believes there will be a number of individuals running and he declined to endorse any one person.

"I don't think it's my responsibility to hand pick a replacement. I will not assume the responsibility of anointing someone to replace me. I believe the citizens of District Three will do a good job at that. They have done a good job in the past," Leeper stated.

The issues Leeper is campaigning on for his at-large candidacy are: ways of improving the city's transit and transportation systems; to find ways in which to broaden sources of revenue; to look for opportunities for public private ventures that have a clear public purpose; to make sure the public policy of "balanced growth" is maintained and implemented; and to stimulate development in all areas of the city.

He also revealed he will represent integrity in government. "That is not exactly an issue but people are concerned about it as much as any issue," Leeper ex-

plained. "People want to have a good feeling about their government."

To the group of supporters in

the chamber, the candidate concluded, "I thank you for your past support. I ask for your prayers and future support."

Recard Reveals He Will Run

Paul Recard, businessman and resident of the Colony Acres community, announced that he will run for the Charlotte District 3 City Council seat this fall.



Recard

Recard made his intention to run known, following City Councilman Ron Leeper's announcement that he will not run for the District seat but will run for City Council at-large.

Involved in politics for a number of years, Recard most recently ran for political office in 1986, when he challenged Louise Brennan in District 55 for the House of Representatives.

Recard is self-employed; the owner of Paul's Painting Company, a sub-contracting business. He is the chairman of Precinct 77,

a member of the Black Political Caucus, the Tuesday Morning Breakfast Club, SCLC, and the NAACP.

"I'm qualified to run," states Recard, who believes there will be a "big race" for District 3 this year.

The only other known prospective candidate for the seat is Ella Scarborough.

Recard says Councilman Leeper has served the District well throughout the five years he has represented it and he intends to support Leeper in his bid for the at-large seat.

Already, Recard has noted issues that need to be addressed in the west Charlotte District 3 area. He cited concerns about public transportation for the Nations Ford Rd. communities, and the need to monitor commercial building in the district.

He will file for the seat July 3. "I hope the people who supported me in my run for in the primaries last year will again lend their support," concluded Recard.

Stepping Stone Housing Moves Residents Out Of Projects

By Loretta Richardson
Post Staff Writer

For many of the residents of Piedmont Courts, Fairview Homes, Dalton Village and other project sites, there has been no other home. Statistics show that once a family moves into public

housing, a trend of permanency moves in as well.

Originally, subsidized housing was intended for families who remain outside the labor force for socially acceptable reasons: the handicapped, the female-headed family with small children at home, those faced with temporary emergencies and those involuntarily without means to provide housing for their families." Henceforth, what was initially intended to be a temporary situation has not achieved its goal.

If anything, policy changes affecting public housing, became more lax over the years and created an atmosphere that seemed to encourage, rather than discourage, evacuation.

For example, limits on the amount of money a family could earn and remain in public housing were removed during the 60's in order to encourage a more adequate economical mix in public housing and to reduce the likeli-

hood that members of a family would quit working to remain in public housing.

The policy was effective. As a matter of fact it was so effective that even families who were financially able to afford rent in the private sector chose subsidized living over home ownership. In Charlotte approximately, one in every ten families living in subsidized two and three-bedroom units were earning enough to pay the equivalent of fair market rents in the private sector. This was a problem.

Addressing the problem, the Charlotte Housing Authority developed a program called Stepping Stone Housing. From the Housing Authority's research, 325 families who were either already living in public housing or who had applied to live in public housing were easily able to afford rental payments in excess of \$250 per month.

It is those 325 families that Stepping Stone Housing was designed

to help. What the Charlotte Housing Authority has proposed is "assisted housing as a stepping stone to better housing." Next year, three public housing projects are scheduled to be built: two in the Hickory Grove area and one at the intersection of Newell-Hickory Grove Road and Robinson Church. Families moving into these newly constructed projects will be doing so, realizing that, within five years, they will be moving into the private sector.

Through Stepping Stone Housing, families will pay \$250 per month for a two-bedroom apartment and \$300 per month for a three-bedroom apartment. Unlike regular public housing, participants in Stepping Stone Housing will not necessarily have to be concerned with rent increases that normally accompanies salary increases nor will they have the luxury of having their rent reduced because their salary has decreased. But these families as part of the program will have to



Bettye Harris

make monthly contributions to an escrow account. The first year monthly contributions to the escrow account will begin at \$15 and increase by \$15 each year so that by the end of five years, the families participating in Stepping Stone Housing will have accumulated \$2,700.

While money is important to placing the family on a sound financial footing, the Charlotte Housing Authority has included other stipulations in Stepping Stone Housing to ensure that the family will be able to make it on their own. Participants in the Stepping Stone Housing program will be provided with extensive counseling and services to insure that they are prepared for the transition to private sector housing.

"The head of house would be expected to enter into a contract or plan, which would include assistance ranging from employment counseling and training to insure both the stability of employment and increasing family income to handle minor home repair skills. Counselors with the program will constantly work with the families to insure that they are prepared for the transition and will be successful."

Bettye Harris, community

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